



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

No. 16-092

August 24, 2016

MEDIA CONTACT: Nancy Rodriguez

Office: (502) 564-2000, ext. 4610 | **Cell:** (502) 330-5063 | **E-mail:** nancy.rodriguez@education.ky.gov

****NOTE: THIS RELEASE IS EMBARGOED UNTIL 3 A.M. EASTERN TIME ON WEDNESDAY, AUG. 24, 2016 PER ACT. (Print reporters: stories may appear in Wednesday morning editions.)****

****NOTE: ACT DOES NOT PROVIDE DISTRICT- OR SCHOOL-LEVEL SCORES TO THE KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AS PART OF ITS GRADUATING CLASS SCORE RELEASE.****

KENTUCKY GRADUATES MAKE INCREMENTAL GAINS ON ACT

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Kentucky public high school graduates held steady in meeting the state’s college-readiness benchmarks on the ACT college-entrance exam in reading and English, but lost ground in meeting the state mathematics benchmark, according to data released today by ACT. Commissioner Stephen Pruitt said the report indicates that Kentucky still has “some serious work ahead of us” to ensure all students are prepared for the next level.

The state benchmarks represent the minimum scores that guarantee students entry into corresponding credit-bearing college courses at Kentucky college and universities without the need for developmental education or supplemental courses. (ACT also has its own College Readiness Benchmarks, which are different than Kentucky’s benchmarks, and represent the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in credit-bearing college courses.)

Nationally, overall achievement – both the average ACT Composite score and the percentage of students meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks – dropped in 2016, a downturn ACT officials attributed to the significant increase in the percentage of students being tested.

PERCENTAGES OF KENTUCKY PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE READINESS Standard- and Extended-Time Students Combined

COLLEGE- LEVEL COURSE	BENCHMARK	2014 GRADUATES MEETING BENCHMARK	2015 GRADUATES MEETING BENCHMARK	2016 GRADUATES MEETING BENCHMARK
English	18	56.4%	57.2%	57%
Mathematics	19	41.3%	44.5%	41%
Reading	20	48%	49.5%	50%

“In recent years, Kentucky graduates – spurred by higher standards and college- and career-readiness goals tied to Senate Bill 1 (2009) – have realized significantly greater gains on the ACT than their counterparts nationwide.

(more)

Visit our website at <http://www.education.ky.gov>

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/kydeptofed and Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kydeptofed

From 2011 to 2015, Kentucky public school graduates made gains in every subject and more than a three-quarter point improvement in the overall composite score,” Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt said. “This year’s results are mixed comparatively. Certainly we would like to see gains each year, but I am encouraged that in two out of three content areas, Kentucky students sustained the gains we have seen since 2011. As we look to the future, we must recommit ourselves to take each and every student to higher achievement levels.”

KENTUCKY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES’ AVERAGE ACT SCORES
Standard- and Extended-Time Students Combined

	2013	2014	2015	2016
English	18.7	19.0	19.1	19.2
Mathematics	18.9	19.1	19.3	19.1
Reading	19.5	19.9	20.0	20.2
Science	19.4	19.7	19.8	19.6
Composite	19.3	19.5	19.7	19.7
Number taking test	45,052	44,558	45,162	46,285

For the past four years, ACT has included scores for students receiving extended-time accommodations in its summary reporting. These students typically register lower test scores than students who do not receive additional time to take the test. Eight percent of Kentucky test-takers receive ACT-approved accommodations as compared with five percent of students nationally.

Composite scores for various groups of public school graduates are up from where they were several years ago, but the numbers illustrate that achievement gaps persist.

2013 - 16 KENTUCKY PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADUATES’ ACT COMPOSITE SCORES
BY ETHNIC GROUP AND GENDER
Standard- and Extended-Time Students Combined

GROUP	2013 COMPOSITE	2014 COMPOSITE	2015 COMPOSITE	2016 COMPOSITE
All Students	19.3	19.5	19.7	19.7
African American	16.3	16.7	16.7	16.8
American Indian	16.7	16.7	17.0	17.3
White	19.8	20.1	20.3	20.3
Hispanic	18.0	18.5	18.4	18.3
Asian	21.4	22.8	22.0	22.6
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	18.5	18.2	18.8	16.6
Two or more races	19.4	19.7	19.8	19.8
Other/No Response	18.1	17.9	18.0	17.8
Males	18.9	19.2	19.4	19.5
Females	19.6	19.9	20.0	20.1
No Gender Response	15.6	15.6	16.5	17.4

(more)

Visit our website at <http://www.education.ky.gov>

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/kydeptofed and Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kydeptofed

Pruitt said it is imperative that each student has an opportunity to graduate college/career-ready. The state is putting an emphasis on strategies to close achievement gaps and working with schools and districts to do so as well as rethink student learning and engagement in high school, he said.

“In Kentucky, we are working to move each child to higher levels of learning while also determining the root cause of achievement gaps, which we believe stem from opportunity gaps and access to rigorous, high quality learning opportunities,” Pruitt said. “Students excel when presented with challenging and interest-driven projects or instruction. That is true for all students, both advanced and less advanced. We must make sure that low income and minority students have the same opportunities to excel as their classmates.”

“The achievement gap is something we all have to own,” he added. “Until we all share responsibility, we won’t see the change we want to see.”

While Senate Bill 1 (2009) drove increased student achievement for the past several years, Pruitt said this year’s flat ACT scores show the timing is right for Kentucky to take advantage of opportunities being offered by the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the main federal law governing public education. Among other things, ESSA calls for states to develop new accountability systems that will close achievement gaps. Pruitt held town hall style meetings this past spring to collect ideas from citizens about how to measure school and student success, and has established work groups to make recommendations on a new accountability system that will be a catalyst for every child succeeding.

“Improving education must be done collaboratively. We need all shareholders working together to improve our schools and the lives our children,” Pruitt said. “This is the most important work we have ahead of us. These are the children of the Commonwealth, our children, and the future of our state depends on us, all of us, coming together to do what is right for each and every one of them.”

There is a strong correlation between student performance on the ACT and the rigor of the courses a student takes in high school. While Kentucky’s minimum high school graduation requirements of four years of English and three years each of mathematics (including Algebra 1, Algebra 2 and geometry); science and social studies aligned with ACT’s recommended core curriculum, the rigor of the courses varies widely. Generally speaking, the more rigorous the courses the student takes, the better the student performs on the ACT.

For the 2016 graduating class report, ACT, Inc. used students’ scores from the last time they took the test, either as a junior or senior.

Statewide data for the junior class who took the ACT in March 2016 will be released in the School Report Card later this fall.

###

Visit our website at <http://www.education.ky.gov>

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/kydeptofed and Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kydeptofed